



## *Inside Ag* *April 2010*

### **Weed Alert** **Mediterranean Sage**



Spring has sprung...and so have noxious weeds. One noxious weed species in particular that has reared its "ugly head" is Mediterranean sage. Mediterranean sage is a List A noxious weed. When a plant species is designated a noxious weed and classified as List A, it is required to be eradicated wherever found in the state.

Mediterranean sage (*Salvia aethiopis*) is a biennial or short lived perennial. During its first year of growth (the rosette stage), leaves are blue-green and covered with woolly, white hairs.



During the second year, plants produce more leaves with a flowering stem. Leaves have a very pungent odor when crushed. The flowering stem can grow two to three feet wide and resemble a candelabra. In the fall, the stem breaks off and forms a tumbleweed dispersing thousands of seeds, sometimes up to 100,000 seeds per plant. Flowers are white to yellowish-white and appear in clusters.

Mediterranean sage is native to the Mediterranean region and northern Africa. It primarily invades rangeland, but will easily show up in riparian areas (places along waterways), forests, roadsides, and dry pastures. In Colorado, Mediterranean sage is known to exist in only four counties in the state: Larimer, Boulder, Garfield, and Montezuma. It is believed the seed source for some infestations was contaminated hay or revegetation materials.



Mediterranean sage initially invades disturbed sites, but quickly spreads to non-disturbed and natural sites. It adapts to a wide variety of environmental conditions and quickly displaces native vegetation that our wildlife relies on. This plant is unpalatable to most grazing animals thereby rendering densely infested pastures useless. The key to effective control of Mediterranean sage is preventing its establishment through the use of sound land management practices. Maintain healthy pastures and rangeland and continually monitor your property for new infestations.